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COMPARATIVE VIEW OF ART-INDUSTRY PRODUCTIONS OF THE PRESENT DAY.*

By J. FALKE.

What course does France now pursue in view of this new and ever increasing tendency? According to our latest observation she still holds firmly to her old methods though indeed in a modified manner. The luxuriant and wild flower ornament has come into fashion again, and by its more delicate and artistic treatment has regained the place it occupied in the second half of the last century, in the later times of Louis XV, and under Louis XVI. Indeed Louis XVI is the war-cry of French fashion. To this change the flowered silk stuffs of Lyons, which were once so celebrated and fashionable, have fallen a sacrifice, to the great pecuniary loss of both manufacturer and designer. Together with the style of Louis XVI the French textile fabrics have also taken up older methods of ornamentation, especially such as were in use in the sixteenth century in Italy, and which owe their origin to the arabesques of Rafaël. Such patterns are particularly adapted for curtains and also furniture coverings where striped stuffs are admissible. Close upon these come the French patterns of the seventeenth century as they were in fashion in the times of Louis XIII and XIV, before they fell back into the contorted and overcharged ornaments which characterise the later time of Louis XIV. These last are less frequently to be seen now than they were five or ten years ago. At last indeed France has taken into account the Oriental style in her textile fabrics, though it was most opposed to her free manner of treatment; it was no longer possible

for her to overlook its importance, and with her accustomed skill in adapting herself to foreign ways, and turning to account whatever was novel, if but for an ephemeral fashion, she has produced creations in the highest degree worthy of recognition in this branch of Art. Especially must we notice the first application, as far as our knowledge extends, of the Indian gold brocade patterns to modern stuffs, and the very successful introduction of shawl patterns and shawl ornamentation for ladies' dresses through the admirable printing of the Alsatian manufactories. To this class belong also the printed Indian or Persian motives on table covers and furniture stuffs, for which also we are equally indebted to the Alsatian factories.

This difference of taste is less pronounced in damasks and lace-work of all kinds, because in these, the color being eliminated, the naturalistic treatment can not produce the same strikingly disagreeable impression though it has assumed rather superfluous dimensions, and covered whole curtains with tropical flowers and landscapes white upon white. France still adheres to this system though in a rather modified manner, and the French custom of having but one curtain of this kind to each window, in opposition to that which allows one on each side, makes it less conspicuous. Belgium and Switzerland follow France in their patterns. England prefers much simpler ones, of conventional or geometrical pattern, with rectangular divisions. Austria has also attempted conventional patterns, but as yet with no persistence. In objects of smaller size, for instance, and in

* See ante, page 1.
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lace work, better designs are frequently seen. So also in Switzerland.

In the decorative treatment of paperhangings however, the opposite tendencies are much more manifest, for here color is of the first importance. The tendency of taste in the nineteenth century has been to paler and paler colors, until at last all harmony has been extinguished in gray, weak, washed out and characterless shades. The paler and grayer the tone, the more delicate and elegant was it considered. When indeed blue or red furniture was placed against the clear and colorless walls the impression was the more unpleasant from the absence of all harmony. The oriental, as well as the mediæval style demanded on the contrary a bolder and healthier coloring, which has now indeed returned, and prefers equal claims with the treatment in paler shades. Where they are placed in juxtaposition an artistically educated eye will always prefer the dark and colored papers. Nor have the ornamental designs experienced a less important change, the old shapeless and extravagant patterns of leaves and flowers copied from nature, but which were anything but natural, being now entirely discarded where there is any pretension to good taste, and replaced not by the oriental arabesques, but by strict conventional patterns more in the Mediæval or best Renaissance style, or by Grecian, Pompeian and Egyptian motives which have at least the recommendation of style and arrangement. — If now we inquire what share the several countries had in this change, we must attribute the foremost place to England: after her to some Rhenish manufactories who have fallen under the influence of the above mentioned reformers of church ornaments, then to the Belgians, especially in their imitations of leather. Both the North and South Germans have also yielded to the new taste, though with less clearness of insight as to the object in view. France in the exhibition of 1867 held fast to her old standpoint with her superb and magnificent productions, shewing landscapes and architectural designs instead of the conventional pattern and ornamentation, and giving a preference to the pale washy shades of color. As for other countries they showed no originality of any kind.

Lastly, to conclude our review of this large branch of Art-Industry, we must notice Embroidery, which has now entirely degenerated and fallen under the influence of an unhealthy naturalism and perverted taste. Indeed, if we leave out of question the East, it is only in catholic countries that embroidery is still practised as a branch of Art, being preserved from disuse by church purposes. But even here it has much deteriorated, and is only now and then restored in a degree by new exertions. The Rhine provinces are to be named as first in order, and the Ecclesiastical embroideries of the Sisters of the nunnery of the "poor child Jesus", at Aix la Chapelle must be noticed as the best productions in Europe. Second to them are the embroideries of Vienna, partly from the filial nunnery of the above, partly in the establishment of Giani; then the

Dutch of Cuypers and Stolzenberg, and lastly the Belgian, where we recognize the influence of the Rhine provinces. As to the embroideries of Lyons and Italy, the former remain still very much under the influence of the old taste, the latter entirely so, the ruling Jesuitism opposing all mediæval innovations in favor of its own peculiar style.

But if here a happier and even more striking beginning has been made, the amateur embroidery which is in every lady's hand and found in every house leaves much to be desired. The French and Berlin patterns and Journals equally tend to a depravation of taste; and the Journals of Fashion, which are filled with ladies' work, render the evil greater and more extensive. Reform is here most necessary, for the department of embroidery is of the widest extent, and every household is interested in it. On the taste of womankind depends in a great measure the general taste of a nation.

GLASS. PORCELAIN. EARTHENWARE.

The more any branch of Art-Industry is subject to the changes of fashion, the more has it been during the last two centuries and is still in dependance on France. Especially is this the case with all ornamental textile stuffs, for here the decoration is all but free from all those limitations which conformity of purpose prescribes in other materials, and fancy and fashion may have full play. Hence we have seen how in this department, the very same style pervades even the novelties of the latest date, so that they have called forth no national differences, for French industry and with it fashion in general, have entered on the path of reform and may possibly pursue it still farther.

But the case is different when we come to the consideration of objects in Glass, though even here indeed, as well as in objects in clay or porcelain, fashion has no little influence in determining the form and decoration. But then the purpose and use, the material and workmanship impose certain conditions which must necessarily be observed. On these are grounded certain distinct, for the most part national peculiarities of style, which every fresh innovation serves only to bring into clearer light.

Accordingly, we may divide modern Glass work considered as an object of Art-Industry into four principal species, differing both in local origin and in their nature; viz., the English, French, Austro-Bohemian and Italian, or rather Venetian. Of these, the English glass excels especially in the white cut or flint glass, the Bohemian in colored crystal, the French in painted glass, the Venetian in blown glass, the great charm of which consists in the grace and lightness of its shape. Fashion however has so great an influence that every country, while excelling in its own speciality, endeavours to reach the peculiarities of the others.

The artistic history of glass, to speak only of vessels, not of mosaics or glass paintings, begins only with

the Renaissance, and indeed we may say with those exquisite and elegant Venetian vessels of Murano, the fabrication of which from blown glass manifests both a skilful hand and an extraordinary artistic feeling. Such works of art, so charming and original because based on the very nature of the material, could only attain such an admirable height of purity in such a fortunate epoch as the Renaissance, and would fall and pass away with it; and so it happened. In the course of the seventeenth century this feeling of the really Beautiful in form was lost; mechanical dexterity and exaggerated tours de force prevailed for some time, then the art fell more and more into decline and oblivion.

The great peculiarity of the Venetian glass had consisted in the delicacy of its artistic form and in the ductility or extensibility of the material, which permitted the application of those linear ornamentations which surround the vessels like a network. To this was added more lately colored glass, especially in chandeliers enriched with florid ornament.

On the other hand the Bohemian glass rested its artistic excellence on the whiteness and purity of the material, while Germany continued to work with a greenish glass enriched with ornament in enamel by means of fusion. The genuine crystal vessels with their cut and polished ornaments served the Bohemian manufacturers as patterns, and about the year 1600 became a very considerable branch of art in Prague. In imitating them they succeeded in bringing the crystal glass to an equal purity, and so the cut ornaments, as was formerly the case with the red crystal, formed the most prominent artistic feature, as did also the crystalline facet-work. Hence the form of the vessels became stiffer, and more architectonic than the Venetian, though a true sentiment of form and proportion long prevailed in the Bohemian manufacture.

But in the eighteenth century England came forward with its plumbiferous Crystal glass, which when cut and polished in crystalline form sparkled like the diamond with prismatic colors. This produced a new artistic element which found immediate approval and led Bohemia into a new channel. As the English took the diamond for their model, the Bohemians sought to imitate in glass the colored jewels which they found in their country, and so entered into a successful rivalry with colored crystal in red, yellow, green etc. The popular taste at least, was with them. For further decoration they made use of cut ornaments, as in the crystal glass, or overlaid one color with another, cutting the ornament on the upper one.

But both England and Bohemia, by cultivating their speciality, sought all kinds of effects in color and light to the entire ruin of all feeling of form, and thus in the first half of this century the glass vessels for the table were all heavy, clumsy and in bad taste. In the mean time the French had adopted a new style of ornament, not so much for the table, as for ornamental glass, treating it like porcelain, making it opaque, or only

semi-transparent, and decorating it with all sorts of paintings, from flowers and arabesques to landscapes and figures. Imitations of this style were produced in Bohemia and wherever else the French taste was followed.

But this style would not satisfy an enlightened taste; while the English glass, sound as it was in principle, was too clumsy in form, the Bohemian did homage only to a common taste, the Venetian fell into decay, and the French failed to recognise the peculiarities of this material. The necessity of a reform could no longer escape the practised eye, and began in two different ways in two different places.

England was the first to begin. As here the form was the worst feature, she undertook its improvement by models of Grecian vessels and of those of the Renaissance period, and, as Bohemia had done before, took the genuine Crystal vessels with their admirable cut ornaments and charming arabesques as their patterns for cutting and etching. Not indeed that the other principle of the refraction of colors through crystalline cutting was given up, on the contrary, it was still more cultivated with conscious intention, and good, bold and vigorous forms united with it, as elegance was not to be attained on account of the interruption of the lines. The Exhibition of 1867 shews what a splendid result has been arrived at in this manner.

In other respects the Venetians under the example of Salviato returned to their former practice and their old artistic treatment of everything, again resting the charm of their productions, enhanced by the use of color, on the lightness and ductility of the material and on the fervid imagination and originality of innate artistic genius. Whoever is acquainted with the new Museum in Murano, will be astonished at the great artistic success to which they have attained in so short a time.

That the paths now entered upon were not only necessary but quite in the right direction can be denied by no one possessed of any observation. The French soon became convinced of their importance, and while they did not give up their own specialty of stained glass, were not long in making experiment of the new and especially of the English method. But magnificent as ever in the province of Art-Industry, they rather dazzle by the colossal proportions of their productions than satisfy a solid and delicate taste. Their too great facility of creation is rather a hindrance than an advantage for a severe style, and their forms and ornaments are often too elaborate and too elegant. Besides, their crystal has neither the clearness of the English, nor the high polish of the Bohemian. Their large painted vases and other articles of luxury are admirable indeed from their own standpoint, but then the standpoint itself is open to attack.

For Bohemia and her material, the white crystal, only one method was practicable, the first of the two English ones, for her glass containing no lead does not give forth the prismatic colors. In the Exhibition of 1867 Lobmeyer alone entered with penetrating energy

and success on the right road. At present many others follow his example and the course is open. Indeed the matter lies in a nutshell. Bohemia has only to return to her own past. One reform however remains for her to effect in which, alas! models fail her, that of colored crystal glass. We should much regret that this art, so satisfactory in many respects should be given up, but it is absolutely necessary that a change should come over both the form and treatment.

At to the Glass manufactures of other countries, considered from an artistic point of view, there is nothing new or peculiar which offers itself. Belgium, for example, follows France, Silesia follows Bohemia, and the rest of Germany cares little for improvement or perfection in an artistic point of view. The only exception is Russia, who, excited by the older eastern glasses of Persian origin, again makes use in a very independent fashion of enamel colors for ornament in relief. Numerous vessels of this kind attracted the attention of the lovers of Art at the Paris Exhibition.

Porcelain and Earthenware articles may be regarded as not materially differing from Glass vessels: In this department also the same artistic stagnation existed and local differences present themselves, partly arising from the treatment of the material, while other countries than those already mentioned come also into question.

As was the case with the Majolica, so was it also with the more ancient earthenware vessels; in the course of the seventeenth century they were thrown into the background by the glazed white faïence, the Delft-ware and others of similar kind, and quite banished from those circles where taste was supposed to exist. But the same fate happened to these when the European Porcelain was discovered in the beginning of the eighteenth century, and one Porcelain manufactory after another now rose up. Wherever porcelain-clay (Kaolin) was found or could be procured, wherever there was real porcelain, as in Austria, Germany, France, the faïence manufacture died out entirely, or became a matter of indifference for art. It was different in England, where the means at hand could only produce a soft highly glazed porcelain, which might be suitable for the more delicate articles of luxury, but was too little solid for common use, which was the reason why for dinner and tea services the faïence was mostly used. At the same time it spread widely in the North, especially in North Germany which formerly had been dependent of Dutch industry, but which now still retains its position. Just as the so-called English porcelain was employed especially for articles of luxury, so was it the case with the soft porcelain of Sèvres, which being in a special manner suitable for painting reigned supreme in this respect.

(To be continued.)

SPECIMENS OF ORNAMENTATION.



No. 1. French. Thirteenth century. Cornice of Aisle of Laon Cathedral.